



Jim Mudd

A Chat with your County Manager

By Jim Mudd

Welcome to our monthly chat. Although Oct. 1 marked the beginning of Fiscal Year 2007 for Collier County government, and while your county staff continues to move forward and build roads, operate water plants, and expand libraries, they also are visioning for the long-term future. In so doing, however, I feel it's also important to take note of where we've been and reflect on our most immediate past. This month I'd like to share with you Collier County's accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2006.

This has been truly an extraordinary and phenomenal year for county staff and me. As I write this for your November issue, it's actually the evening of Oct. 24, 2006, the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Wilma, which struck Collier County near the end of an already active hurricane season. We were actually poised for the return of the snowbirds when in the early morning hours of Oct. 24, 2005 Hurricane Wilma made landfall at Collier County, ending our 45-year run of good fortune in avoiding hurricanes. The Category 3 storm hit at Cape Romano about 20 miles south of Naples and packed winds in excess of 120 mph. The community and county staff did a sterling job preparing for, reacting to and recovering from this terrible storm. The staff had the streets cleaned by Dec. 23, 2005, and collected more than 900,000 cubic yards of debris that was processed and disposed of in approximately 10 weeks, which was record time. The cost of this unscheduled activity was \$35 million, however through due diligence and great teamwork by staff and our contractors, all accounting and data gathering was processed and forwarded to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) by May of this year, resulting in a final cost to the county of only \$3.2 million. We had a successful audit by the Office of the Inspector General

of Homeland Security and we were the first county to receive full reimbursement from FEMA.

And some of the best indicators of how well we did as a county government came from our federal representatives: Rep. Connie Mack relayed to President Bush that Collier County is a model county when it comes to hurricane preparedness and response. Sen. Mel Martinez said that the State of Florida needs to learn from Collier County and the country from the State of Florida. Governor Jeb Bush offered similar praise. Those compliments are due to the hard work of each county employee who performed in an exceptional and professional manner during this crisis and the exemplary leadership that guided them.

As you can see, Hurricane Wilma stretched county resources, but I am extremely proud of our preparation and response. That monumental event took up a great deal of effort and energy in 2006 and the results I would have to claim as one of our greatest achievements.

And now, let's see what else your county government can list among its accomplishments for 2006. Most recently, the Collier County Communication and Customer Relations Department (CCR) unveiled and launched the redesigned www.colliergov.net website. The site not only has a

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dynamic new look and feel, but more importantly for the user, the content is much easier to access and navigate.

I cannot include all our achievements for 2006 due to space limitations here, but I will attempt to list for you now those most visible to you, the citizens of Collier County, beginning with a successful capital

construction program. Managing these projects to a timely completion and on budget continues to be a priority.

Road construction projects of interest include:

* Golden Gate Overpass - While the project has experienced setbacks with unstable soil in the canal bottom as well as unsuitable soils under the structure undetected by prior borings, efforts have been taken by county staff to assist in controlling costs and promoting completion of the project. The updated schedule for opening to traffic is February 2007. There was also substantial completion of construction of Golden Gate Parkway during the past year and the county is awaiting the finish of the Golden Gate Overpass and the Golden Gate Interchange to fully complete that roadway project.

* I-75/Golden Gate Interchange - This is a Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) contract and project, which is on schedule and planned to open in the late spring or early summer of 2007. The county Transportation Division is working to make sure this interchange only opens when the Golden Gate Overpass is operational.

* Goodlette-Frank Road (Golden Gate Parkway to Pine Ridge Road) - Construction to widen this two and one-half mile section from four lanes to six lanes, which started in August 2005, is continuing through 2006 and scheduled to be completed in early 2007. Plans call for an eight-foot pathway on the west side and upgraded street lighting to meet current standards. The project will include a bypass road to go from westbound Golden Gate Parkway behind the bank on the northeast corner of Goodlette-Frank Road and Golden Gate Parkway to northbound Goodlette-Frank Road. This fall crews plan to have completed and open to traffic three lanes northbound between Golden Gate Parkway and Clubhouse Drive. The new bypass road is also expected to be opened to traffic at the same time. The project will be landscaped following completion of construction.

* Immokalee Road - Maintaining construction schedules for the three six-laning Immokalee Road projects

from U.S. 41 to 43rd Street has been a critical component of our construction plan. The section from C.R. 951 to 43rd Street is on schedule with six-laning (four lanes open to traffic) from west of Wilson Boulevard to Oil Well completed in August 2006 (three-laned future eastbound from C.R. 951 to west of Wilson in January 2007 and completion of entire project in April 2008). The section from east of I-75 to C.R. 951 came in close to the engineer's estimate and was approved by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) at its March 14, 2006 BCC meeting. Contract negotiation was completed and Astaldi started construction in October 2006 with completion planned by Summer 2008. The project from U.S. 41 to I-75 experienced some delay in the first milestone (Livingston to I-75) because of utility conflicts. However, the first milestone area of I-75 to Livingston Road now has traffic flowing on three lanes eastbound and three lanes westbound with the Airport Road to Livingston section scheduled for completion in July 2007 and the whole project to U.S. 41 expected to be completed by September 2008.

* Rattlesnake-Hammock Road (Polly Avenue to Collier Boulevard) - This two-mile widening project will expand the roadway from two lanes to six lanes. Construction began in January of this year and completion is expected in about two years. The project features 10-foot sidewalks on the north side and six-foot sidewalks on the south side. The project will be landscaped following completion of construction.

* Phase II Computerized Signal System & SCOOT Pine Ridge Road pilot - The Phase II improvements are completed and the SCOOT pilot on Pine Ridge Road is also complete. Pilot test showed a 6 percent reduction in driver delay. The system is being further refined and secondary benefits (i.e. traffic count information) are being pursued.

* Vanderbilt Beach Road (Airport-Pulling Road to Collier Boulevard) - This five-mile project will include six-laning the current two-lane road-